



State of California Seismic Safety Commission Biannual Newsletter July through December 2004

Committee Adopts Report: Seismic Safety in California's Schools – Findings and Recommendations On Seismic Safety Policies and Requirements for Public, Private, and Charter Schools

The California Seismic Safety Commission has responded to inquiries from members of the Legislature, the public, and parents about the seismic safety requirements for schools in California. Concerns have been raised about the risks posed by older school buildings, the different seismic standards for public, private and charter schools, and the safety of buildings converted to school use. The public concern was increased when a pre-Field Act California public school, seismically retrofitted in 1959, was damaged in the moderate December 22, 2003 San Simeon earthquake. A common theme in these questions is that parents have a right and a desire to know if their children's schools are safe, regardless of whether they are public, private or chartered. A review of policies and standards was conducted and a report was developed to answer these questions.

Since the passage of the Field Act on April 10, 1933, one month after the Long Beach earthquake destroyed many schools, Californians have come to expect that their children are safe if an earthquake occurs while they are attending school. To a very great extent their expectations are being met. The School Safety report considers those situations where schools may fall short of our expectations, so as to ensure that similar seismic safety be provided to all school children in California regardless whether they attend public, private or charter schools in new or old buildings. Its findings include:

- In any community, public schools constructed under the Field Act after 1978

are likely to be among the safest buildings in which to experience a major earthquake. Private schools are not required by law to meet the Field Act standards, and therefore are not likely to be as safe as public schools of similar age.

- Private schools located in older buildings can pose a serious risk to the life-safety of their students. The full extent of the problem cannot be assessed because of lack of the consistent regulation and enforcement. In addition, certain older public school buildings (pre-1978) may not be as safe as modern buildings and have the potential to be a life-safety risk to their occupants.
- Non-structural components that are not anchored or braced, such as mechanical, electrical and architectural elements, in older schools can pose significant life-safety risks.

Commissioner Mark Church of San Mateo County conducts forum on Emergency Preparedness

On Tuesday, July 27, 2004, Seismic Safety Commissioner Mark Church sponsored a local forum in San Mateo on homeland security and natural disaster plans, entitled: Preparedness: Lessons Learned Since 9/11. The forum topics included: bioterrorism and public health, transportation security, first responder plans, effective disaster response, improvements to planning and coordination among local agencies, and what the public can do to be better prepared at home, at work, or in the community.

Commissioner Church represents local government on the Commission, and is

Supervisor and President of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors.

911 for Kids Annual Event

The annual Athletes & Entertainers for Kids that spotlights “heroes” among children and emergency education annual holds an event promoting safety for children. This year, it was held in Long Beach California on September 11, 2004. The Commission was provided a complimentary booth by the event promoters and seismic educational and preparedness materials were distributed to the public.

and see where the “hot spots” are around the state.

Commission Recognizes Universal Studios’ Emergency Preparedness Operations

On October 20, 2004, representatives David Geary and Nancy _____ from Universal City Studios Emergency Operations Center (EOC) gave a detailed presentation to the Commission describing their facility and emergency operations plan for the studio and amusement park. The Commission was extremely impressed with the level of planning and preparedness and acknowledged the achievement of Universal Studio’s Emergency Services with a plaque of recognition.



Commission Staff Participate in Fleet Week 2004 – 5th Annual Disaster Preparedness Fair in San Francisco

On October 9, 2004, the local Office of Emergency Services held a Community Disaster Preparedness Fair in which the Commission participated. The “predict the size, win a prize” contest was used as the public information focus whereby the public was asked to predict the county where the largest earthquake would happen that particular day. They provided their name and phone number and the winner received a CD Radio Player. The contest engages the public in discussions about earthquakes around the state, and gives them the opportunity to view the Shake Potential Map

The Commission sponsored two important bills in 2004. The Commission also took formal positions on several bills, testified on legislation and tracked over forty proposed measures.

- **AB 3032 (Yee)** exempts URM building owners that complete retrofits to URM buildings from the existing requirement to post an entry-area sign warning about the dangers posed by URM buildings during earthquakes. This bill was approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.
- **AB 3033 (Yee)** restricts the requirements that local building agencies may impose as a pre-condition to approving a proposed URM retrofit project and, thereby, minimizes the costs of the project. This bill was approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

- **AB 3082 (Assembly Judiciary Committee).** This bill is a technical clean-up measure that re-numbers the existing law authorizing the collection of fees to support the Commission's operations. This bill was approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

these buildings during earthquakes. This bill was approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

Other Bills Monitored by the Commission

- **SB 1175 (Denham)** allows newly constructed facilities on community college campuses to be built in accordance with either the UBC or the Field Act. Under current law, the construction of facilities on community college campuses must comply with the Field Act. This bill was approved by the Senate and referred to Assembly. It failed passage in June before the Assembly. The Commission adopted an "Oppose" position on this measure.
- **AB 3010 (Laird)** calls on the State Architect to establish a collaborative process for plan reviews of proposed facilities on community college campuses. The Governor vetoed this bill.
- **ACR 199 (Liu)**, introduced at the request of the Commission, is a formal resolution of the Legislature declaring the first week of May as "Disaster Resistant California" week in recognition of the Third Annual Disaster Resistant California Conference (May 3-5).
- **SB 1363 (Ducheny)** prohibits operators of hotels and motels located within 10 miles of a declared disaster area from raising their rates in excess of 10 percent over pre-disaster rates. This bill was approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.
- **AB 2197 (Aghazarian)** orders the formation of an Advisory Group (including the Commission) to evaluate whether the State should conduct inspections of dams that are licensed and inspected by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. An estimated 200 dams are subject to dual jurisdiction under current law. This bill was vetoed by the Governor.
- **AB 2533 (Salinas)** imposes fines and penalties on building owners that fail to post placards on unreinforced masonry buildings. The placards are to warn the public about hazards posed by